



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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Texting fail!

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Thanks to smartphones and the Internet, videos of people walking and texting their way into an embarrassing adventure aren't difficult to find.

While they may provide a laugh, distracted walking accidents can hurt or even prove fatal.

According to Dr. Joe MacFadden, research psychologist, Human Factors Directorate, U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center, Army data don't currently show a trend in texting while walking accidents. That's doesn't mean, however, they don't happen.

"Pedestrian accidents may seem rare, especially when compared to privately owned vehicle and motorcycle accidents," MacFadden said. "But a number of incidents go unreported, so the issue isn't on the radar.

"Many pedestrians who suffer minor injuries due to texting, talking or video streaming while walking may be embarrassed and not report the whole story to their safety office or leader."

There's also an issue with reporting in the non-military population.

Nationwide, approximately 1,150 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms annually for distracted walking injuries, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. They believe the total is probably higher, though, because patients might not admit they were using an electronic device. Many police departments don't collect that information in accident reports, either.

Since problems with distracted walking are still emerging, it's important to be proactive.

"Smart motorists know the best way to talk on their portable device is to get out of traffic and come to a stop so they can talk," said Walt Beckman, a safety specialist in the Driving Directorate, USACR/Safety Center. "The same holds true with texting and walking. If you're in a busy area, stop and complete your texting in a safe place, then resume walking."

MacFadden echoed those thoughts.

"Pedestrian accidents are senseless occurrences and can easily be prevented if people pay more attention to their surroundings and potential hazards than the distraction of electronic devices," he said.

For more information on pedestrian safety, visit <https://safety.army.mil>.